United Nations A/70/377

General Assembly

Distr.: General
18 September 2015

Original: English

Seventieth session
Agenda item 113 (e)
Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections: election of eighteen members of the Human Rights Council

Letter dated 8 July 2015 from the Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

I have the honour to inform you of the decision of the United Arab Emirates to present its candidature for re-election to the Human Rights Council for the period 2016-2018. We believe that in our first term, we have contributed positively to the work of the Council and supported its efforts to promote religious tolerance, ensure respect for cultural diversity and advance issues of gender empowerment. Our wish to serve a second term on this esteemed body reflects our view that societies that uphold human rights are more resilient, more sustainable and more secure.

Should we be given the opportunity of serving once more on the Council, the United Arab Emirates pledges to continue to participate actively in its work, in the spirit of constructive engagement and cooperation, and with the aim of upholding international standards of human rights.

I would like to transmit herewith an aide-memoire covering the pledges and commitments of the United Arab Emirates to promoting human rights, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/251, entitled "Human Rights Council" (see annex).

(*Signed*) Lana **Nusseibeh**

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Annex to the letter dated 8 July 2015 from the Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

Candidature of the United Arab Emirates for membership of the Human Rights Council for the period 2016-2018

The United Arab Emirates is committed to the promotion and protection of human rights at home and around the world. The United Arab Emirates recognizes the important role of the Human Rights Council in this global effort. We believe that the United Arab Emirates can continue to bring a useful contribution to the work of the Council. That is why the United Arab Emirates has decided to present its candidature for re-election to the Human Rights Council for the period 2016-2018 in the election to be held during the seventieth session of the General Assembly, in the fall of 2015.

The United Arab Emirates has made impressive progress on human rights since its founding in 1971. The openness of the United Arab Emirates to the rest of the world has allowed it to reach its current level of success. The United Arab Emirates has built a peaceful, tolerant, multicultural society in which people from all over the world live harmoniously together. Significant investments have been made in education, health care and sustainable economic development. The United Arab Emirates ranked fortieth in the world in the 2014 United Nations Human Development Index and twentieth in the world in the *World Happiness Report 2015*.

Building on these achievements, the United Arab Emirates makes the following voluntary pledges and commitments for the period 2016-2018:

Voluntary pledges and commitments

1. Rights of the child

Protecting children is at the top of the national agenda. The United Arab Emirates is committed to providing a safe environment that allows the full development of children's abilities and talents and to taking appropriate steps in the health and education fields to care for the psychological, social and cultural needs of children in accordance with its national strategy, based on the best interests of the child. The United Arab Emirates has taken a range of initiatives to protect the rights of the child. The Ministry of the Interior established the Higher Committee for Child Protection in 2009 and the Child Protection Centre in 2011, which recently launched an awareness campaign dubbed "Together to Prevent Child Abuse", to raise community awareness and educate parents and teachers about various forms of child abuse and ways to prevent it.

As part of the efforts of the United Arab Emirates to promote the rights of the child, the Federal National Council has approved a draft federal law to provide a framework for child protection and to harmonize national legislation with international conventions to which it is a party, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The draft law includes provisions on care and protection for children, including to ensure that they enjoy a standard of living adequate for their physical, mental, psychological and social development.

Pledge:

- **The United Arab Emirates will adopt the law on the protection of children.**

2. Women's human rights

The United Arab Emirates considers the empowerment of women to be fundamental for our development as a modern, progressive society. Women participate meaningfully in every facet of civic, economic and political life in the United Arab Emirates. In 2013, the United Nations ranked the United Arab Emirates forty-third in the world on gender equality.

The updated National Strategy for Empowerment of Emirati Women in the United Arab Emirates for 2015-2021 was launched by Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak, Chair of the General Women's Union, on 8 March 2015, International Women's Day. The strategy provides a framework for government, private sector and civil society organizations to establish workplans to contribute to positioning the United Arab Emirates among the most advanced countries in the area of women's empowerment.

In May 2015, the Government adopted a decision to establish the United Arab Emirates Gender Balance Council to ensure that Emirati women continue to play a leading role in the development of the United Arab Emirates. The Council will carry out several functions, including reviewing legislation, policies and programmes to achieve gender balance in the workplace.

Pledge:

- **The United Arab Emirates will establish a national task force on the empowerment of women.**

3. Rights of persons with disabilities

The United Arab Emirates is committed to promoting and protecting the rights of persons with disabilities. The United Arab Emirates ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on 19 March 2010 and submitted its first periodic report to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on 24 January 2013.

The United Arab Emirates has instituted a legislative framework and taken various policy measures to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities. The Ministry of Education has taken steps to implement a school integration project. The United Arab Emirates also provides children and adults with disabilities with the training required for their integration into society. The Ministry of the Interior has established a Centre for the Employment of Persons with Disabilities.

Among other initiatives focused on enabling and empowering people with disabilities, the United Arab Emirates has hosted the annual international conference "ACCESS Abu Dhabi" since 2006. Experts and practitioners from around the world join to share their best practices in the field of the care and rehabilitation of persons with disabilities.

Pledge:

- **The United Arab Emirates will continue to take measures to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities, in coordination with relevant ministries and national institutions and in cooperation with associations and representatives of civil society.**

4. Protections for workers' rights

The status of the United Arab Emirates as an attractive place of work for people from around the world has made it a major recipient of foreign labour, which is of benefit to the workers, the sending countries and the United Arab Emirates. According to the World Bank, foreign workers in the United Arab Emirates remitted more than $29 billion in 2014, making the United Arab Emirates the third-largest source of remittances in the world. The continual improvement of the protection of the rights of workers is a national priority.

The United Arab Emirates has ratified nine International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions related to the rights of workers and has adopted numerous laws to protect workers' rights. The confiscation of workers' passports is prohibited, and workers do not require their employer's permission to leave the country. All workers must be provided with comprehensive health insurance at the cost of the employer, and there are strict rules regarding the provision of proper accommodation for workers. Workers can transfer sponsorship between employers upon the expiration of the original employment contract or if the original employer fails to meet its obligations to the worker. Now, more than 3.2 million workers are paid through the Wage Protection System.

Enforcement of protections for workers has been intensified, and substantial penalties have been imposed for violations relating to working conditions and workers' rights. In 2014, the Ministry of Labour conducted more than 288,670 inspections within the private sector as part of its commitment to providing safer workplaces, meeting occupational health and safety standards and ensuring that housing for labourers is satisfactory. In 2014, inspectors detected serious offences in 479 facilities, which were referred for public prosecution.

The United Arab Emirates has also signed numerous memorandums of understanding with workers' home countries designed to promote cooperation in protecting the rights of workers in the United Arab Emirates.

Improving protections for workers is a work in progress. The Ministry of the Interior has established eight centres to address complaints from domestic workers and provide 24-hour support and assistance.

Pledges:

- **The United Arab Emirates will continue to take measures to strengthen protections for workers, including working with source countries, ILO and the Global Forum on Migration and Development to address recruitment fees, adopting a standard form contract providing workers with greater flexibility to change employers, and strengthening enforcement of the prohibition on the retention of passports;**
- **The United Arab Emirates will adopt a new law to protect domestic workers, including limiting hours of work and providing for rest days and vacation, standards for accommodation, and changing employers.**

5. Trafficking in persons

The United Arab Emirates is a leading player in the global campaign against human trafficking. The United Arab Emirates was the first country in the region to

enact a comprehensive anti-human-trafficking law, Federal Law No. 51, in 2006. In 2013, the law was amended in conformity with the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (Palermo Protocol), which the United Arab Emirates ratified in 2009.

The National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking, established in 2007, has implemented a "5 P's" strategy to fight the menace of trafficking, comprising: prevention, prosecution, punishment, protection, and promotion of international cooperation. The Committee produces an annual report on combating human trafficking in the United Arab Emirates, which may be found on the Committee's website: www.nccht.gov.ae. Several shelters provide protection, rehabilitation and assistance to victims.

We were pleased to host a visit by the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, in April 2013. The Special Rapporteur recognized the progress achieved by our national campaign.

Pledge:

- **The United Arab Emirates will continue its efforts to combat human trafficking at the national level, work as a founding member within the Group of Friends United against Human Trafficking and support the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.**

6. National human rights action plan

The United Arab Emirates is continuously reviewing existing laws and policies with a view to strengthening the protection of human rights. Several proposed reforms are currently under consideration.

Pledge:

- **The United Arab Emirates will develop a national human rights action plan to set out its priority initiatives for the period 2015-2020 to promote and protect human rights.**

7. Support for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

The United Arab Emirates supports the work of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and his Office. The United Arab Emirates provides approximately $90,000 annually in voluntary contributions to the budget of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). In addition, in 2013 the United Arab Emirates contributed $1.5 million to support the work of OHCHR. At the March 2015 session of the Human Rights Council, the United Arab Emirates announced a new commitment of $1 million to support OHCHR.

Pledge:

- **The United Arab Emirates will continue to support the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and will explore the possibility of entering into a memorandum of understanding on technical cooperation.**

8. Follow-up to the universal periodic review

The United Arab Emirates underwent its first universal periodic review in 2008 and its second universal period review in 2013. The United Arab Emirates appreciates the opportunity that the review provides to engage in a constructive dialogue with the international community and generate ideas for further improvement. In 2010, the United Arab Emirates established the Standing Committee to Follow Up the Universal Periodic Review. The Committee is chaired by Anwar Mohammed Gargash, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, and includes a number of federal and local governmental entities and civil society organizations in the United Arab Emirates. The Committee acts as a permanent forum for the consultative process with civil society in the United Arab Emirates. The United Arab Emirates is in the process of following up on the 100 recommendations that it accepted and the additional 7 that it partially accepted during its second universal periodic review.

Pledge:

- **The United Arab Emirates will continue to follow up on the recommendations it accepted during its second universal periodic review. In particular, the United Arab Emirates is in the process of developing a plan to establish a national human rights institution in conformity with the Paris Principles.**

9. Religious tolerance

The United Arab Emirates supports a number of initiatives to promote religious tolerance:

- The United Arab Emirates co-chairs the Working Group on Countering Violent Extremism, established by the Global Counter-Terrorism Forum;
- The United Arab Emirates hosts the International Centre of Excellence against Violent Extremism ("Hedayah"), established to bring together world experts to address the challenge of diverting individuals from terrorism;
- On 19 February 2015 at the White House summit on countering violent extremism, the United Arab Emirates and the United States announced the creation of a joint Anti-Daesh Online Operations Centre, based in Abu Dhabi, to counter Daesh messages;
- In addition, on 25 February 2015 in the Security Council, the United Arab Emirates announced that it intends to launch a new "Contact Group on Countering Extremism".

Pledge:

- **The United Arab Emirates will continue to support initiatives to promote religious tolerance.**

10. International and regional organizations

The United Arab Emirates is working actively and effectively to promote human rights within the United Nations bodies in New York, such as the Third Committee of the General Assembly and the Security Council. At the regional level, the United Arab Emirates is a party to the Arab Charter on Human Rights. In December 2013, it submitted its first periodic report to the Arab Commission for

Human Rights, as the State has played a leading role in the establishment and strengthening of effective mechanisms for human rights within the framework of the League of Arab States. Moreover, the United Arab Emirates has supported efforts to promote and protect human rights through the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

The initiatives of the United Arab Emirates include the following:

Support for the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

The United Arab Emirates has been elected to serve on the Executive Board of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) for two terms, 2013-2015 and 2016-2018. The United Arab Emirates has pledged to contribute $7 million to the UN-Women budget in 2014-2015.

Ending sexual violence in conflict

The United Arab Emirates is part of the international effort to end sexual violence in conflict. The Minister for Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirates, Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, is a Global Champion of the Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative, and the United Arab Emirates is one of the 155 countries to have signed the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict. The United Arab Emirates strongly supports the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. In 2013, the United Arab Emirates committed $1.5 million, jointly with the United Kingdom, to support the efforts of the Government of Somalia to combat sexual violence in conflict. At the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, held in London in June 2014, the United Arab Emirates announced an additional $1 million to support the United Nations in strengthening the capacity of affected countries to address this issue.

Securing the equal right to education of every girl

The United Arab Emirates is supporting efforts to realize the equal enjoyment of the right to education by every girl. At the September 2014 session of the Human Rights Council, the United Arab Emirates led the consensus adoption of the decision to hold a panel discussion at the June 2015 session to share best practices in realizing the equal enjoyment of the right to education by every girl, which is essential to empowering women.

Pledge:

- **The United Arab Emirates will continue to promote human rights through international and regional organizations. In particular, the United Arab Emirates will continue to support UN-Women, including by funding the opening of a liaison office for UN-Women in the United Arab Emirates.**

11. International cooperation in support of human rights

The United Arab Emirates believes that international cooperation is an important cornerstone of efforts to promote human rights. We recognize the centrality of economic development and poverty alleviation to the realization of human rights. The United Arab Emirates is a leading development partner. The

United Arab Emirates exceeded the United Nations target for development assistance for developed countries of a 0.7 per cent official development assistance (ODA)/gross national income (GNI) ratio by donating AED 18 billion (approximately $4.89 billion), representing 1.17 per cent of its GNI, for official development assistance in 2014. The United Arab Emirates has been named the world's largest donor of official development assistance in proportion to its gross national income (ODA/GNI ratio) for the second consecutive year.

The United Arab Emirates has played an important role in achieving the eight Millennium Development Goals with a strong commitment to the rural, agricultural, urban and economic development of partner countries and a singular focus on health and education. The United Arab Emirates has launched various projects contributing to improved food supply in poor countries, greater environmental sustainability and biodiversity conservation, as well as better water management, child vaccination campaigns and meaningful support for global campaigns against disease.

Pledge:

- **The United Arab Emirates will continue to work with partner countries and international organizations to meet international development targets through its foreign aid programme, in areas such as health, education, food security and economic and social development.**